

**STATEMENT OF SENATOR HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
NOMINEE FOR SECRETARY OF STATE
SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
JANUARY 13, 2009**

"As we focus on Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, we must also actively pursue a strategy of smart power in the Middle East that addresses the security needs of Israel and the legitimate political and economic aspirations of the Palestinians; that effectively challenges Iran to end its nuclear weapons program and its sponsorship of terror; and persuade both Iran and Syria to abandon their dangerous behavior and become constructive regional actors; and that also strengthens our relationship with Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, other Arab states, along with Turkey and our partners in the Gulf, to involve them in securing a lasting peace in the region.

As intractable as the Middle East problems may seem -- and many presidents, including my husband, have spent years trying to work out a resolution -- we cannot give up on peace. The president-elect and I understand and are deeply sympathetic to Israel's desire to defend itself under the current conditions and to be free of shelling by Hamas rockets. However, we have also been reminded of the tragic humanitarian cost of conflict in the Middle East and pained by the suffering of Palestinian and Israeli civilians. This must only increase our determination to seek a just and lasting peace agreement that brings real security to Israel; normal and positive relations with its neighbors; independence, economic progress, and security to the Palestinians in their own states.

We will exert every effort to support the work of Israelis and Palestinians who seek that result. It is critical not only to the parties involved, but to undermining the forces of alienation and violent extremism around the world.

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